



Aboriginal Women

Aboriginal women face social and economic barriers related to both race and gender. This statistical update describes some of the social and economic characteristics of this growing population in the province.

Reliable statistical information about Aboriginal women is mostly limited to the Statistics Canada Census which is conducted every five years. In the Census, a person was considered Aboriginal if she responded "yes" to the identity question "Are you an Aboriginal person, that is, a North American Indian, Métis, or Inuit?"¹.

Figure 1 shows that two-thirds (66%) of the 55,800 Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan report their identity as First Nations and 32% report their identity as Métis². From a provincial perspective, 11% of women in the province are Aboriginal.

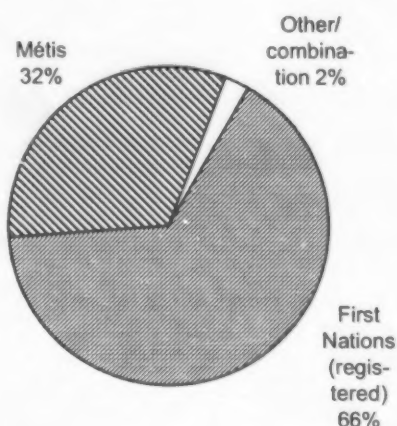
Approximately one-third (32%) of Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan live on a Reserve although the proportion is higher (47%) for First Nations women. Conversely, more than half of First Nations women now live off-reserve.

Age Distribution

The population of Aboriginal women generally and First Nations women in particular is noticeably younger, on average, than the population of non-Aboriginal women. For example, 67% of Aboriginal women are under the age of 30 compared with 40% of non-Aboriginal women (see Figure 2). At the other end of the scale, only 5% of Aboriginal women are 60 years of age or older compared with 21% of non-Aboriginal women.

From a provincial point of view, Aboriginal women make up 11% of the population overall but 21% of children under the age of ten are Aboriginal. The relative youth of Aboriginal women has a significant effect on their social and economic status.

Figure 1: Identity of Saskatchewan
Aboriginal Women, June 1996

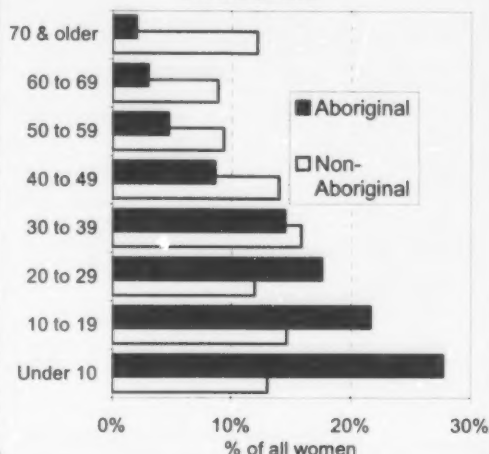


Family Status

One of the consequences of the relative youth of the Aboriginal population is the nature of family structures. In 1996, 45% of the population of Aboriginal women were unmarried children (that is, daughters) living with their parent(s) compared with 30% of non-Aboriginal women (see Figure 3).

Lone parent families and common-law relationships are more common among Aboriginal women. In 1996, 13% of Aboriginal women were lone parents and 10% were in common-law relationships. This compares with 5% and 4% respectively for non-Aboriginal women.

Figure 2: Age Distribution for Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Women, 1996



Aboriginal women are less likely to be living alone – 4% compared with 12% of non-Aboriginal women in 1996. Among the senior population where living alone is more common, 26% of Aboriginal seniors lived alone in comparison to 45% of non-Aboriginal senior women.

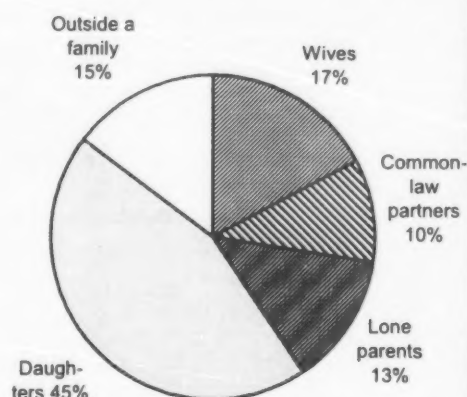
Mobility

Aboriginal women are part of a highly mobile population. Between 1991 and 1996, 58% of Aboriginal women changed their home compared with 37% of non-Aboriginal women (see Figure 4). In the year before the Census, three out of 10 women changed their home. Over one-half of the moves are within their community.

Education

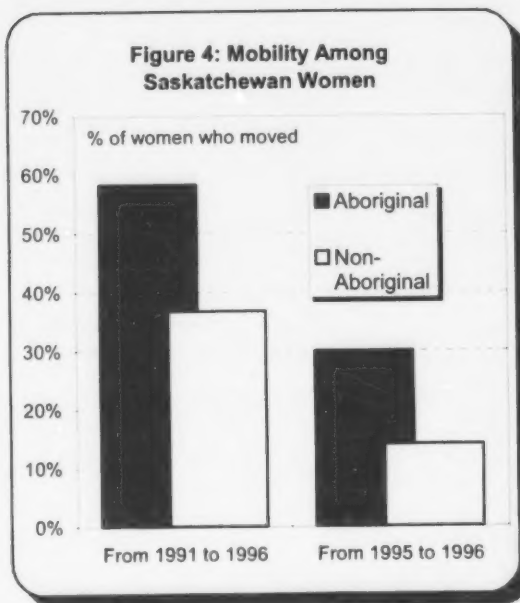
Although the gap is closing, there is still a substantial difference between

Figure 3: Family Status of Aboriginal Women, June 1996



Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women in formal education levels. Figure 5 shows completed education levels for adult Aboriginal women 15 years of age and older compared with non-Aboriginal women.

In 1996, six out of 10 non-Aboriginal women had completed Grade 12 compared with five out of 10 Métis women and four out of 10 First Nations women. The percentage of Aboriginal women who have completed post-secondary education is also lower – 21% of First Nations women and 28% of Métis women compared with 38% of non-Aboriginal women. In 1996, 1,615 Aboriginal women or 5% of the total had a university degree compared with 10% of non-Aboriginal women.



Aboriginal women with a post-secondary degree, diploma, or certificate tend to specialize in somewhat different fields than non-Aboriginal women (see Figure 6). Among the graduates and compared with non-Aboriginal women, Aboriginal women are more likely to have a degree, diploma, or certificate:

- in the social sciences, a category that includes lawyers and social workers; and
- in engineering and applied science, a category that includes the trades and resource processing technologies.

They are less likely to specialize in:

- commerce, management, and business administration; and
- in the health professions and technologies.

There is some evidence that the education gap between

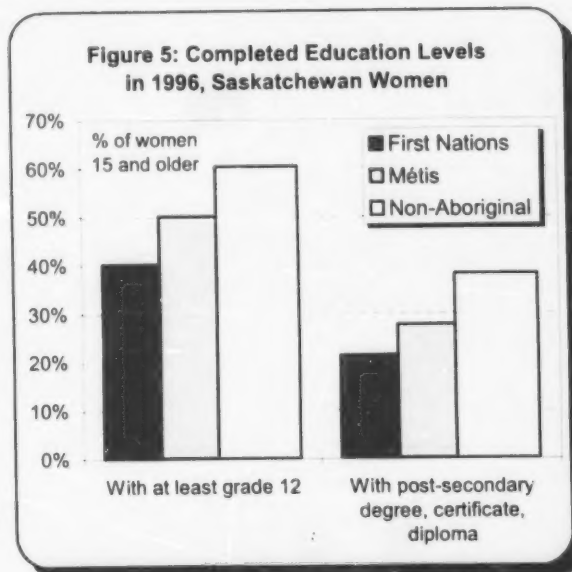
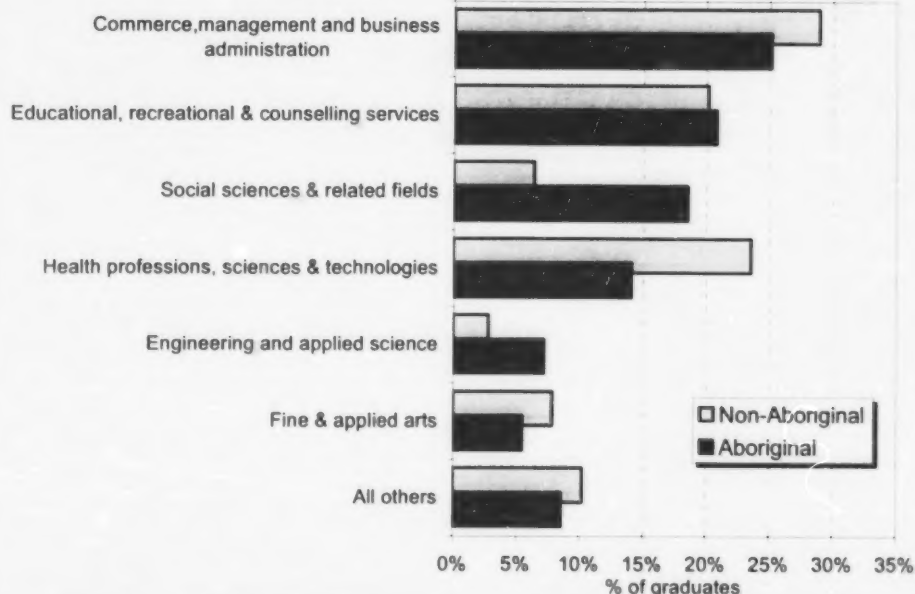


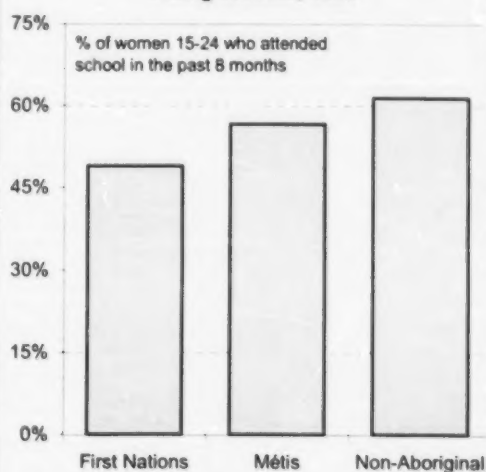
Figure 6: Areas of Specialization, Saskatchewan Women with a Post-Secondary Degree/Diploma/Certificate in 1996



Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women may be closing. Figure 7 shows the proportion of women in the 15 to 24 age group who attended school (full-time or part-time) in the eight months prior to the 1996 Census.

Aboriginal women in this age group were less likely than non-Aboriginal women to be going to school, but the difference is relatively small – 51% for Aboriginal women compared with 61% for non-Aboriginal women. If you take into account the fact that Aboriginal women tend to take post-secondary education at an older age, these statistics suggest that the “education gap” may begin to close in the coming years.

Figure 7: School Attendance Among Young Women, 1996



Employment

In the spring of 1996, approximately one-half of the adult Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan were in the labour force, that is, either employed or unemployed (see Figure 8). This is a significantly lower participation rate than among non-Aboriginal women where 62% were in the labour force³.

The unemployment rate for Aboriginal women was 22% in 1996, much higher than the 6% rate for non-Aboriginal women⁴.

Figure 9 shows the employment rate (the percentage of the adult population employed) for selected sub-populations. The overall employment rate is much lower among First Nations women (28%) than among Métis women (44%). It is also lower among

Figure 8: Labour Force Status of Aboriginal Women in June 1996

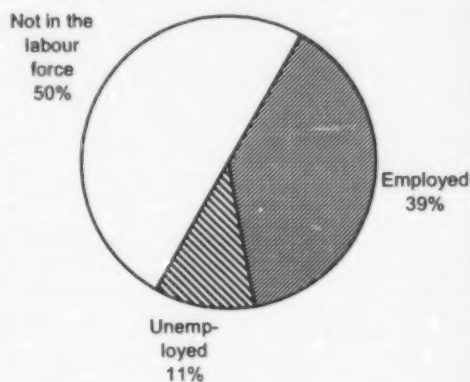
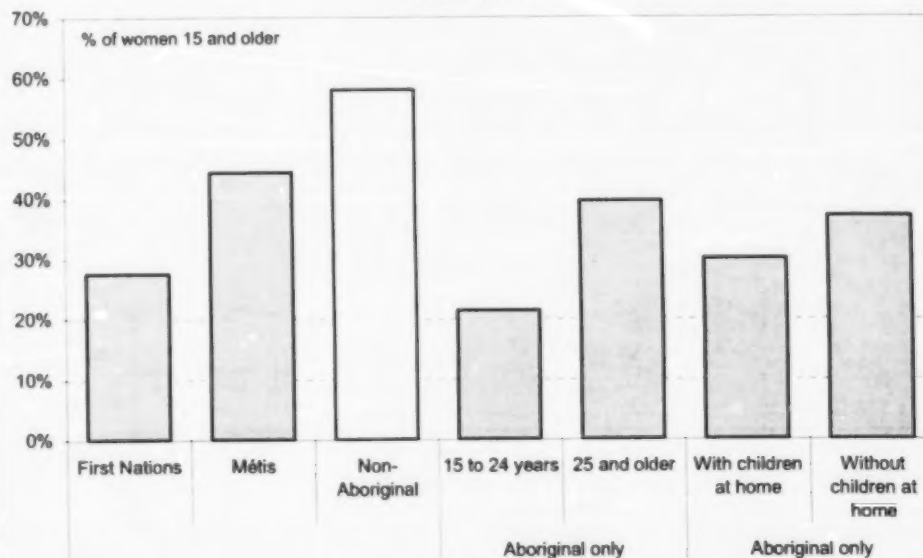


Figure 9: Selected Employment Rates for Saskatchewan Women, as of June 1996



youth and among women with children at home. In fact, the largest gap in the employment rate is among young Aboriginal women (15 to 24 years of age) where 21% are employed compared with 58% of non-Aboriginal women.

The most common industry group in which both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women are employed is the health and social services group. There are differences, however, as Figure 10 shows.

Aboriginal women in the experienced labour force⁵, when compared with other women, are more likely to be employed in the public sector. Specifically, they are more likely to be employed in:

- government services (15% compared with 5% for non-Aboriginal women; see box); and
- education services (15% compared with 10%).

They are less likely to be working in:

- agriculture (2% compared with 10%);
- retail trade (10% compared with 13%); and
- finance and insurance (2% compared with 5%).

Although the public sector is the most common industry group for Aboriginal women, an examination by occupational groups shows that women in the public sector tend to be in low paying service jobs. Aboriginal women are more likely to work in the sales and service occupation group and in the "social science, education, government services" group and less likely to work in the health related occupational group. They are also less likely to be working in the "business, finance, and administrative" group (see Figure 11).

Employment in Government Services

The "government services" industry group includes all levels of government: First Nations, Métis, federal, provincial, and municipal. The data suggest that most Aboriginal women working in government services were working in First Nations government – 925 or 48% of the 1,930 Aboriginal women working in government services were First Nations women living on Reserve.

Employment by Industry and Occupation

Statistics for employment in industry and occupation groups require careful interpretation. The industry group refers to the type of business in which the person is employed whereas the occupation group refers to their duties. Many occupation groups cross industry boundaries. In the retail trade industry group, for example, there are people in managerial occupations as well as people in sales occupations and service occupations.

Figure 10: Experienced Labour Force by Industry, Saskatchewan Women, 1996

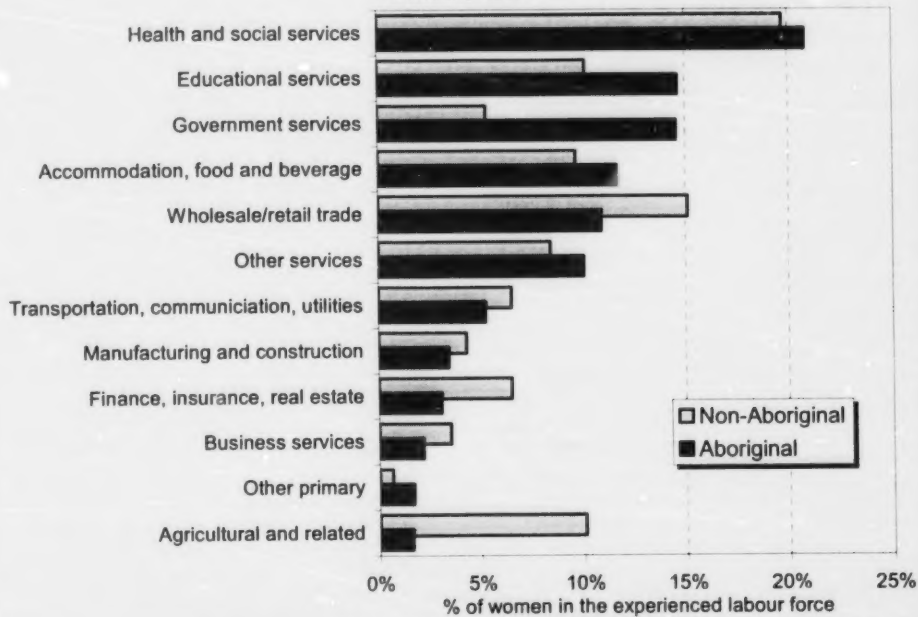
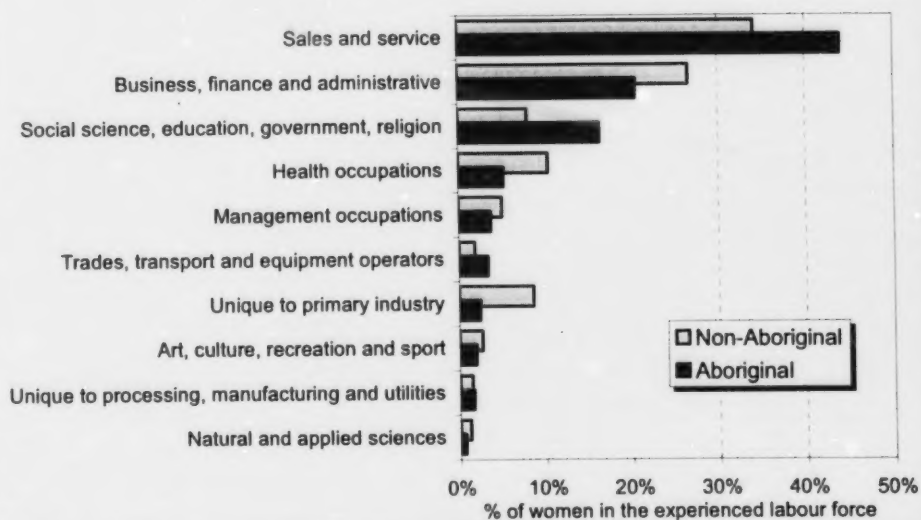


Figure 11: Experienced Labour Force by Occupation Group, Saskatchewan Women, 1996



Income

There are distinct differences in sources of income for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan.

Aboriginal women are more likely to receive money from government transfers such as social assistance and employment insurance and considerably less likely to receive income from employment or "other" sources⁶ (see Figure 12).

Aboriginal women depend on government transfer payments for almost one-half of their income (42%) compared with 19% for non-Aboriginal women. This reliance on government transfers is particularly evident among First Nations women.

Average personal income is much lower for Aboriginal women than for non-Aboriginal women. In 1995, the year prior to the Census, the average income for Aboriginal women (including the 9% with zero income) was \$10,200 compared with \$16,300 for non-Aboriginal women. To a large degree, the lower incomes among Aboriginal women seem to be a consequence of their marginal attachment to the labour force. Among those with a full-time, full-year job, their employment income was \$22,700, only 10% lower than for non-Aboriginal women (see Figure 13). Total income, on the other hand, is 37% below the level for non-Aboriginal women.

Figure 12: Sources for Personal Income, 1995, Saskatchewan Women

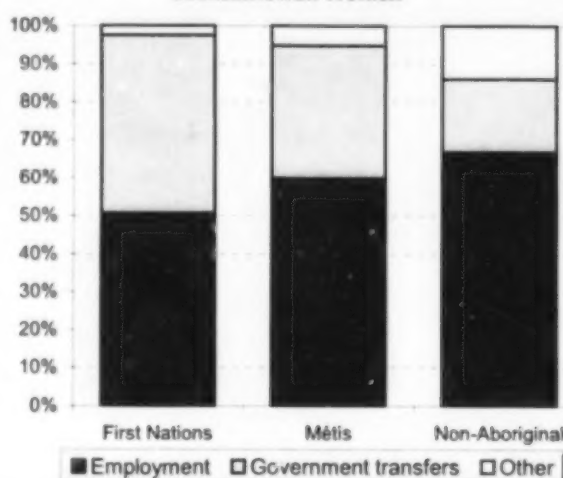
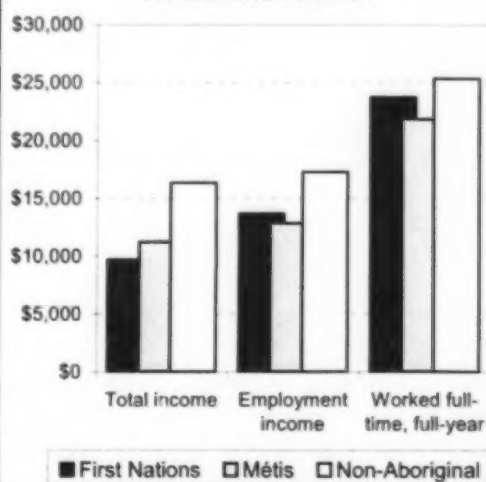
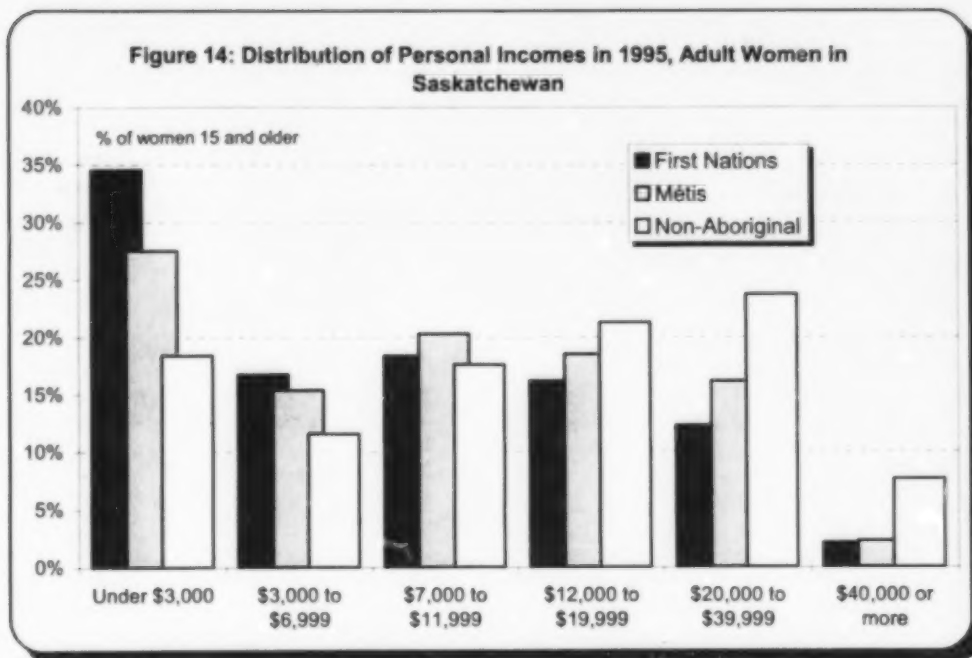


Figure 13: Average Incomes in 1995, Saskatchewan Women





Overall, the lower average incomes are a consequence of the preponderance of Aboriginal women at the low end of the income distribution⁷. Figure 14 shows that 35% of First Nations women and 27% of Métis women had annual incomes below \$3,000 in 1995. Very few were at the upper end of the income spectrum with incomes over \$40,000 in 1995.

Notes

Source: These data are derived from the 1996 Statistics Canada Census. Questions about Aboriginal identity are on the "long form" of the Census so they are, in effect, based on a 20% sample of households (100% on Reserve). Only persons living in private dwellings receive the long form so these statistics exclude those living in so-called "collective" dwellings including, for example, prisons, special care homes, hotels, homes for the disabled, and group homes.

1. *The definition also includes women who reported that they were registered under The Indian Act or who reported that they were members of a First Nation even if they did not answer "yes" to the identity question.*
2. *The statistics for "First Nation members" in this report include all women who report that they are "members of a First Nation". The statistics for Métis women include all women who identify themselves as Métis. There is a small overlap (less than 5%) between these two categories.*
3. *The "participation rate" is the percentage of the adult population (15 & older) that is in the labour force, that is, either employed or unemployed.*
4. *The "unemployment rate" is the percentage of the labour force that is unemployed.*
5. *Employment by industry and occupation is based on the number of women in the "experienced labour force". The industry and occupation are recorded for the current job or, if not employed, the most recent job in the past 18 months.*
6. *Government transfers include, for example, social assistance, employment insurance, disability benefits, the Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, and Workers' Compensation benefits. "Other" income includes, for example, investment income, private pension income, income from rental properties, inheritances, and alimony payments.*
7. *The "normal" measure of low income status – the Low Income Cutoff or LICO – is not published by Statistics Canada for Aboriginal women. This is largely because the LICO requires a measure of the proportion of income spent on housing and the housing situation on Reserve does not easily fit into the methodology.*